

Influence of Empty Nest Syndrome on the Quality of Life of Middle Aged Parents

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ABSTRACT

Empty Nest Syndrome is the term used to describe the spectrum of emotions and feelings that parents go through when their child moves out of the house for a variety of reasons such as marriage, further education or employment prospects. The concept of quality of life encompasses all the aspects of one's life including domains such as social, psychological, physical, spiritual, and environmental. The objective of the Study was to evaluate the relationship between Empty nest syndrome and quality of life of middle aged adults, for which Empty nest syndrome scale- Indian form (ENS-IF) and The WHOQOL-BREF were used. A total sample of 120 respondents was taken, including 59 fathers and 61 mothers aged between 40-65 years whose children have moved out of home. Purposive sampling technique was employed because the study is focused on empty nesters. The findings suggest that there is a negative correlation between Empty nest syndrome and quality of life of middle aged adults, which signifies that an increase in empty nest syndrome leads to decrease in quality of life. There was gender difference in empty nest syndrome and quality of life, but the difference was not significant statistically.

Keywords: *Empty Nest Syndrome, Quality of Life, Middle-Aged Adults, Gender Difference, Life Satisfaction, Transition*

The significant and frequently underestimated effects of this shift make research on this subject crucial. With children leaving home, middle-aged parents experience redefining of responsibilities and daily schedules, resulting in a range of emotional and psychological modifications. Understanding this phenomenon is pertinent as it directly impacts the Overall well-being and quality of life of this section of society.

Empty nest syndrome - Empty Nest Syndrome refers to a range of feelings and emotions that parents experience when their child moves out of home for numerous reasons including further studies, job opportunities or even marriage.

Parents want their children to move forward in their lives and succeed but at the same time it is difficult for them to let their children go, to let go off the responsibilities as they find it challenging to imagine a life that doesn't revolve around their children.

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Empty nesters experience a plethora of emotions that often involve sadness, loneliness, anxiety, loss of purpose in life. Some might feel that they have lost a part of their identity. While an empty nest is usually followed by some negative emotions, it can also give parents an opportunity to explore more aspects of their life other than the responsibilities of their child. They may get more involved in social events and things of personal interest which they might have compromised in order to tend to their responsibilities as a parent.

Quality of life- Quality of life is a subjective variable that varies from individual to individual and their perception of overall well-being. It can also be seen as a measure of one's satisfaction from their current life conditions. Quality of life is measured by looking at various dimensions such as social life, living conditions, one's mental health as well as the physical health.

A person is said to have a good quality of life when they feel content and at peace with their overall well-being looking at all the dimensions. Quality of life can get compromised in the face of distress that people may feel in day to day life involving basic things such as poor health, insufficient resources or disturbed mental health.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hidayati and Suparno (2024) carried a research to evaluate the connection between empty nest syndrome and resilience. One hundred middle-aged parents that suffer from empty nest syndrome were included in the sample. Product moment correlation was used to assess the data. The results show that the variables for resilience and empty nest syndrome had a negative association.

The study conducted by Koshy, Patel, Barman (2023) focussed on assessing and comprehending how Empty Nest Syndrome affects the mental health of parents of nursing students. The results indicate that when the children move out both the parents are affected and experience feelings of loss, sadness, fear, and incompetence in addition to challenges adjusting to new responsibilities.

The study conducted by Budhia, Neogi, Rathi (2022), Determines the prevalence of emptiness in middle-aged male and female individuals. Compared to men, it was discovered that the prevalence was higher in females. The results showed a noteworthy variation in psychological and personality traits between the two groups.

Mansoor (2019) conducted a study which examined the relationship between middle-aged adults' psychological health and empty nest syndrome. The study sample comprised forty middle-aged dads and forty-one middle-aged moms. According to the study's findings, there was no difference in the psychological well-being or empty nest syndrome experiences of mothers and dads, but there was a substantial difference in the experiences of less educated parents and more qualified parents.

The purpose of the study conducted by Kaur, Gulati, & Kaur (2016) was to compare the psychological well-being of elderly parents who lived in two distinct environments—families with children and those with empty nests—based on gender disparities. Sixty senior couples from middle-class families made up the sample. The findings showed that older women were more likely than older males to experience psychological issues in both situations. Nonetheless, compared to families with children, the elderly in empty nest households had more serious issues.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Aim- The aim of this research is to study the influence of Empty nest syndrome on the quality of life of middle aged parents.

Objectives

- To evaluate the relationship between empty nest syndrome and quality of life among middle aged Adults.
- To investigate the gender differences in empty nest syndrome and Quality of Life among middle aged adults.

Hypothesis

- H1- There will be a significant relationship between Empty Nest Syndrome and quality of life of middle aged adults.
- H2- There will be significant gender difference in Empty Nest Syndrome and Quality of Life among middle aged adults.

Sample

The sample size for the study was fixed as 120. The data from these 120 respondents was collected using survey forms. For the study purposive sampling method was selected, as the study is focused on empty nesters.

Research design

In order to determine the link and degree of interconnectivity between two variables, this study employs a quantitative, correlational methodology. The independent samples t-test was used to assess the gender differences in the variables. After obtaining respondents' agreement, data was gathered from them via survey questions. Valid and dependable tools were used to acquire the data.

Variables

- **Dependent Variable** – Quality of Life of Middle Aged Parents
- **Independent Variable** – Empty Nest Syndrome

Procedure

Data was collected from the respondents using questionnaires. Consent was taken before beginning the procedure. Instructions about how to go about the questionnaire were given before hand. The respondents were assured that their responses will be kept confidential and will be used only for academic purposes. They were informed that they can withdraw at any point they feel uncomfortable. After collecting the data, it was scored as per the norms of the tool. In order to make sense of the data collected, statistical procedures were carried out, on the scored data, using SPSS. To study the relationship between empty nest syndrome and quality of life along with its specific domains, Pearson correlation method was used and its significance was tested. To study the gender differences in empty nest syndrome and quality of life, Independent samples t-test was used and significance of difference was tested.

Description of Tools

The Whoqol-Bref, Division of Mental Health and Prevention of Substance Abuse World Health Organization, 1998

A 26-item questionnaire called WHOQOL-BREF is a reliable and valid tool, used to evaluate people's quality of life. Consists of four areas: social interactions, psychological

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well-being, environmental health, and physical health. On a response scale, each item is given a score between 1 and 5. Higher the score on a domain, higher the Quality of Life.

Empty Nest Syndrome Scale- Indian Form (ENS-IF)

The 50-item ENS-IF questionnaire is designed to assess the degree of empty nest syndrome. It has been constructed and designed using the six-point Likert scale pattern. It's a useful and trustworthy tool. The degree of empty nest syndrome is indicated by the sum of the raw scores for each of the 50 items

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and Interpretation

The results were computed using SPSS on the scored data. Pearson Correlation method was used to test the relationship between Empty Nest Syndrome and Quality of Life of Middle Aged Parents.

Independent Sample T-test was computed to evaluate the gender difference in Empty Nest Syndrome and Quality of Life of Middle Aged People. The computed results along with the interpretation are given below-

Table 1: Correlation between Empty Nest Syndrome and Quality of Life of Middle Aged Parents.

		Correlations	
		Total QOL	EMPTYNEST SYNDROME
Total QOL	Pearson Correlation	1	-.359**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
EMPTYNEST SYNDROME	Pearson Correlation	-.359**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows that Correlation was computed between Quality of Life and Empty Nest Syndrome of Middle Aged Parents. The Correlation Coefficient came out to be $-.359^{**}$ which means that there is a significant negative correlation between Quality of Life and Empty Nest Syndrome of Middle Aged Parents. This implies that Quality of Life and Empty Nest Syndrome are inversely related, i.e. if the level of Empty Nest Syndrome experienced by Middle Aged Parents increases, the Quality of Life of Middle Aged Parents will decrease.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation for Empty Nest Syndrome (gender-wise).

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EMPTYNESTSYNDROME	Male	59	125.20	26.498	3.450
	Female	61	125.80	20.936	2.681

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Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation statistics for Empty Nest Syndrome of 120 participants. (Males=59, Females=61).

Table 3: T-test result of gender difference in Empty Nest Syndrome.

GENDER	N	MEAN	SD	t	df	p-value
Male	59	125.20	26.498	-1.38	118	.891
Female	61	125.80	20.936			

Table 3 shows the t-value for Empty Nest Syndrome among middle aged parents. From the result table it can be interpreted that there is no significant gender difference between, Males (Mean=125.20, SD=26.49) and Females (Mean=125.80, SD=20.93) in Empty Nest Syndrome. T(118)= -1.38, p-value= .891 indicates no significant difference between the two groups as p-value > 0.05.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation for Quality of Life (gender-wise).

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total QOL	Male	59	88.71	9.662	1.258
	Female	61	87.84	12.229	1.566

Table 4 Shows the mean and standard deviation statistics for Quality of Life of 120 participants. (Males=59, Females=61).

Table 5: T-test result of gender difference in Quality of Life.

GENDER	N	MEAN	SD	t	df	p-value
Male	59	88.71	9.662	.434	118	.665
Female	61	87.84	12.229			

Table 5 Shows the t-value for Quality of Life among middle aged parents. From the result table it can be interpreted that there is no significant gender difference between, Males (Mean=88.71, SD=9.66) and Females (Mean=87.84, SD=12.22) in Quality of Life. T(118)= .434, p-value= .665 indicates no significant difference between the two groups as p-value > 0.05.

DISCUSSION

The results in table no. 1 show that there is a negative correlation that exists between the two variables which implies that they are inversely related. The Correlation Coefficient came out to be -.359 which is statistically significant.

H1- There will be a significant relationship between Empty Nest Syndrome and quality of life of middle aged adults.

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As per the results, the hypothesis is accepted and it can be concluded that Empty Nest Syndrome and Quality of Life have significant negative correlation.

The results in table no. 3 and 5 show that there is no significant gender difference that exists between Males and females in experience of Empty Nest Syndrome and the Quality of Life. The p-value for Empty Nest Syndrome and Quality of Life came out to be .891 and .665 respectively, both of which are >0.05 .

H2- There will be significant gender difference in Empty Nest Syndrome and Quality of Life among middle aged adults.

As per the results, the hypothesis is rejected and it can be concluded that there is no significant gender difference that exists between Males and females in experience of Empty Nest Syndrome and the Quality of Life.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to evaluate the influence of Empty Nest Syndrome on the Quality of Life of Middle Aged Parents. The results show that there is a negative association between Empty Nest syndrome and Quality of Life of Middle Aged Parents, which implies that as the level of Empty Nest Syndrome increases, the level of Quality Of Life decreases. The findings show that there is no significant gender difference in the experience of Empty Nest Syndrome and Quality of Life of Middle Aged Parents.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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